HALF SPEED

Mastering Certificate

ABBEY ROAD'S world-renowned engineers have been cutting grooves into discs since the studios first opened their doors in 1931. This record was pressed from a master cut using a precision technique known as half-speed mastering. The procedure requires the source master and the cutting lathe to run at half speed on a specially adapted Neumann VMS-80 lathe.

This rare and specialised technique transforms difficult to cut high-end frequencies into relatively easy to cut mid-range frequencies. The result is a cut with excellent high frequency response and very solid and stable stereo images. In short, half-speed mastering produces a master of the highest quality that enables the pressing plant to produce a superlative record.

MILES SHOWELL

Mastering Engineer, Abbey Road Studios

Mastered at Abbey Road Studios

Half Speed Mastering

ABBA®
The Visitors

Mastered at

Abbey Road Studios

Half Speed Mastering

This record was cut using a specialist technique known as half-speed mastering.

This artisan process results in cuts that have superior high frequency response (treble) and very solid and stable stereo images.

In short, a very high quality master that helps to create a very high quality record.

CAT NO. 00602445271108

The Visitors

ABBA

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5. Lik

All

(on 'S

Elect

Keyb
Flute & Cla

Julius

SIDE A

1. THE VISITORS
2. HEAD OVER HEELS

SIDE B

1. WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE
2. SOLDIERS

SIDE C

1. I LET THE MUSIC SPEAK
2. ONE OF US

SIDE D

1. TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE
2. SLIPPING THROUGH MY FINGERS
3. LIKE AN ANGEL PASSING THROUGH MY ROOM

6 02445 27110 8

POLAR MUSIC PRODUCTION

STEREO

POLS 342

STEREO

6 02445 27110 8

45 RPM mastered by MILES SHOWELL at ABBEY ROAD STUDIOS.

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CAT NO. 0060244527110R

ABBA®

The Visitors

Mastered at

Abbey Road Studios

Half Speed Mastering

This record was cut using a specialist technique known as half-speed mastering.

This artisan process results in cuts that have superior high frequency response (treble) and very solid and stable stereo images.

In short, a very high quality master that helps to create a very high quality record.

POLAR MUSIC PRODUCTION

STEREO & MONO

CAT NO. 00602445271108

SIDE A

1. THE VISITORS
2. HEAD OVER HEELS

SIDE B

1. WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE
2. SOLDIERS

SIDE C

1. I LET THE MUSIC SPEAK
2. ONE OF US

SIDE D

1. TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE
2. SLIPPING THROUGH MY FINGERS
3. LIKE AN ANGEL PASSING THROUGH MY ROOM

6 02445 27110 8

CAT NO. 006024452711 08

ABBA

The Visitors

ABBA

The Visitors

A.
1. The Visitors
2. Head Over Heels
3. When All Is Said And Done
4. Soldiers

B.
1. I Let The Music Speak
2. One Of Us
3. Two For The Price Of One
4. Slipping Through My Fingers
5. Like An Angel Passing Through My Room

All songs written, arranged & produced by
Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus

Engineered by Michael B. Tretow

Drums Ola Brunkert
(on 'Soldiers' and 'The Visitors' Per Lindvall)
Percussion Åke Sundqvist
Bass Rutger Gunnarsson
Electric & Acoustic Guitars Lasse Wellander
Acoustic Guitars Björn Ulvaeus
Keyboards & Synthesizers Benny Andersson
Flute & Clarinet 'I Let The Music Speak' Jan Kling
Mandolins 'One Of Us' The Three Boys

Album Design: Rune Söderqvist
Photo: Lars Larsson
Julius Kronbergs Atelje, Skansen, Stockholm
Digitally recorded and mixed at
Polar Music Studios, Stockholm

45 RPM mastered by MILES SHOWELL at ABBEY ROAD STUDIOS.

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ABBA

The Visitors

A.
1. The Visitors
2. Head Over Heels
3. When All Is Said And Done
4. Soldiers

B.
1. I Let The Music Speak
2. One Of Us
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Cat. No. 0060244527110B
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ABBA THE VISITORS

0060244527110B

ABBA

The Visitors

THE VISITORS

(Crackin' Up)

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

I hear the door-bell ring
and suddenly
the panic takes me
the sound so
ominously leaning
through the silence
I cannot move
I'm standing
numb and frozen
among the things
I love so dearly
the books, the paintings
and the furniture
help me

The signal's sounding
once again and
someone tries the door-knob
none of my friends
would be so stupidly
impatient
and they don't dare
to come here
anymore now
but how I loved our
secret meetings
we talked and talked
in quiet voices
smiling

Now I hear them moving
muffled noises coming
through the door
I feel I'm
crackin' up
voices growing louder
irritation building
and I'm close to fainting
crackin' up
they must know by now
I'm as bee trembling
in a terror overgrowing
crackin' up
my whole world is falling
going crazy
there is no escaping now
I'm
crackin' up

These walls have
witnessed all the
anguish of humiliation
and seen the hope
of freedom glow
in shining faces
and now they've
come to take me
come to break me
and yet it isn't
unexpected
I have been waiting
for these visitors
help me

Now I hear them moving...

HEAD OVER HEELS

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

I have a very good friend
the kind of girl who
likes to follow a trend
she has a personal style
some people like it
others lend
to go wild
you hear her voice
everywhere
taking the chair
she's a leading lady
and with no trace
of hesitation she
keeps going

Head over heels
breaking her way
pushing through unknown
jungels everyday
she's a girl
with a taste for the world
(the world is like a playing ground
where she goes rushing)
head over heels
setting the pace
running the
gauntlet in a
whirl of lace
she's extreem
if you know
what I mean

Her man is one I admire
he's so courageous
but he's constantly tired
each time when
he speaks his mind
she pats his head
and says
"that's all very fine
exept that will
of your own
when you're alone
now we'd better hurry"
and with no trace
of hesitation she keeps going

Head over heels...

You hear her
voice everywhere
taking the chair
she's a leading lady
and with no trace
of hesitation she
keeps going

Head over heels...

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

Here's to us
one more toast
and then we'll
pay the bill
deep inside
both of us
can feel the
autumn chill
birds of passage
you and me
we fly instinctively
when the summer's
over and the dark
clouds hide the sun
neither you nor
I'm to blame
when all is said and done

In our lives
we have walked
some strange
and lonely treks
slightly worn
but dignified
and not too
old for sex
we're still striving
for the sky
no taste for humble pie
thanks for all
your generous love
and thanks for
all the fun
neither you nor
I'm to blame
when all is said and done

It's so strange
when you're down
and lying on the floor
how you rise
shake your head
get up and
ask for more
clear-headed and
open-eyed
with nothing
left untried
standing calmly
at the crossroads
no desire to run
there's no hurry
anymore
when all is said and done

SOLDIERS

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

Do I hear
what I think
I'm hearing
do I see the signs
I think I see
or is this
just a fantasy
is it true
that the beast
is waking
stirring in his
restless sleep tonight
in the pale moonlight
in the grip
of this cold December
you and I have
reason to remember

Soldiers write the songs
that soldiers sing
the songs that
you and I don't sing
they blow their horns
and march along
they drum their drums
and look so strong
you'd think that
nothing in the
world was wrong
soldiers write the songs
that soldiers sing
the songs that
you and I won't sing
let's not look the other way
taking a chance
cause if the bugler
starts to play
we too must dance

What's that sound
what's that
dreadful rumble
won't somebody
tell me what I hear
in the distance
but drawing near
is it only
a storm approaching
all that thunder
and the blinding light
in the winter night
in the grip
of this cold December
you and I
have reason
to remember

Soldiers write the...

ABBA The Visitors

I LET THE MUSIC SPEAK

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

I'm hearing images
I'm seeing songs
no poet has ever painted
voices call out to me
straight to my heart
so strange
yet we're so
well acquainted
I let the music speak
with no restrains
I let my feelings
take over
carry my soul away
into the world
where beauty meets
the darkness of the day

Where my mind is
like an open window
where the high and
healing winds blow
from my shallow sleep
the sounds awake me
I let them take me

Let it be a joke
let it be a smile
let it be a farce
if it makes me laugh
for a little while
let it be a tear
let it be a sigh
coming from a heart
speaking to a heart
let it be a cry

Some streets
are emptiness
dry leaves of autumn
rustling down
on old alley
and in the dead of night
I find myself
a blind man
in some ancient valley
I let the music speak
leading me gently
urging me like a lover
leading me all the way
into a place
where beauty will
defeat the darkest day

Where I'm one with
every grand illusion
no disturbance
no intrusion
where I let the
wistful sounds seduce me
I let them use me

Let it be a joke...

Let it be the joy
of each new sunrise
or the moment
when a day dies
I surrender without
reservation
no explanations
no questions why
I take it to me
and let it flow
through me
yes, I let the
music speak
I let the music speak

ONE OF US

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

They passed me by
all of those great
romances
you were, I felt
robbing me
of my rightful chances
my picture clear
everything seemed so easy
and so I dealt
you the blow
one of us had to go
now it's different
I want you to know

One of us is crying
one of us is lying
in her lonely bed
staring at the ceiling
wishing she was
somewhere else instead
one of us is lonely
one of us is only
waiting for a call
sorry for herself
feeling stupid
feeling small
wishing she had
never left at all

I saw myself
as a concealed attraction
I felt you
kept me away
from the heat
and the action
just like a child
stubborn and misconceiving
that's how I
started the show
one of us had to go
now I've changed and
I want you to know

One of us is ...

TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

He had what you might
call a trivial occupation
he cleaned the platforms
of the local railway station
with no romance
in his life
sometimes he wished
he had a wife
he read the matrimonial
advertising pages
the cries for help
from different people
different ages
but they had nothing to say
at least not until the day
when something
special he read
this is what it said

If you dream of
the girl for you
then call us and get two
for the price of one
we're the answer
if you feel blue
so call us and get two
for the price of one

He called the number
and a voice said
Alice Whiting
the voice was husky
and it sounded quite exciting
he was amazed
at his luck
the purest streak
of gold he'd struck
he said I read
your ad, it sounded
rather thrilling
I think a meeting
could be mutually
fulfilling
why don't we meet
for a chat
the three of us
in my flat
I can't forget
what I read
this is what it said

If you dream of...

She said I'm sure
we must be perfect
for each other
and if you doubt
it you'll be
certain when
you meet my mother

SLIPPING THROUGH MY FINGERS

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

Schoolbag in hand
she leaves home
in the early morning
waving goodbye
with an absent-minded smile
I watch her go
with a surge of
that well-known sadness
and I have to sit down
for a while
the feeling that I'm
losing her forever
and without really
entering her world
I'm glad whenever I
can share her laughter
that funny little girl

Slipping through my fingers
all the time
I try to capture
every minute
the feeling in it
slipping through my fingers
all the time
do I really see what's
in her mind
each time I think
I'm close to knowing
she keeps on growing
slipping through my fingers
all the time

Sleep in our eyes
her and me
at the breakfast table
barely awake I
let precious time go by
then when she's gone
there's that odd
melancholy feeling
and a sense of
guilt I can't deny
what happened to the
wonderful adventures
the places I had
planned for us to go
well some of that we did
but most we didn't
and why I just don't know

Slipping through my fingers

Sometimes I wish
that I could freeze
the picture
and save it from
the funny tricks of time

Schoolbag in hand
she leaves home
in the early morning
waving goodbye
with an absent-minded smile

LIKE AN ANGEL PASSING THROUGH MY ROOM

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

Long awaited darkness falls
casting shadows on the walls
in the twilight hour
I am alone
sitting near the fireplace
dying embers warm my face
in this peaceful solitude
all the outside world subdued
everything comes back
to me again
in the gloom
like an angel passing through my room

Half awake and half in dreams
seeing long forgotten scenes
so the present runs
into the past
now and then become entwined
playing games within my mind
like the embers as they die
love was one prolonged good-bye
and it all comes back
to me tonight
in the gloom
like an angel passing through my room

I close my eyes
and my twilight
images go by
all too soon
like an angel passing through my room

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ABBA The Visitors

THE VISITORS

(Crackin' Up)

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

I hear the door-bell ring
and suddenly
the panic takes me
the sound so
ominously tearing
through the silence
I cannot move
I'm standing
numb and frozen
among the things
I love so dearly
the books, the paintings
and the furniture
help me

The signal's sounding
once again and
someone tries the door-knob
none of my friends
would be so stupidly
impatient
and they don't dare
to come here
anymore now
but how I loved our
secret meetings
we talked and talked
in quiet voices
smiling

Now I hear them moving
muffled noices coming
through the door
I feel I'm
crackin' up
voices growing louder
irritation building
and I'm close to tainting
crackin' up
they must know by now
I'm in here trembling
in a terror evergrowing
crackin' up
my whole world is falling
going crazy
there is no escaping now
I'm
crackin' up

These walls have
witnessed all the
anguish of humiliation
and seen the hope
of freedom glow
in shining faces
and now they've
come to take me
come to break me
and yet it isn't
unexpected
I have been waiting
for these visitors
help me

Now I hear them moving ...

HEAD OVER HEELS

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

I have a very good friend
the kind of girl who
likes to follow a trend
she has a personal style
some people like it
others tend
to go wild
you hear her voice
everywhere
taking the chair
she's a leading lady
and with no trace
of hesitation she
keeps going

Head over heels
breaking her way
pushing through unknown
jungels everyday
she's a girl
with a taste for the world
(the world is like a playing-ground
where she goes rushing)
head over heels
setting the pace
running the
gauntlet in a
whirl of lace
she's extreem
if you know
what I mean

Her man is one I admire
he's so courageous
but he's constantly tired
each time when
he speaks his mind
she pats his head
and says:
"that's all very fine
exert that will
of your own
when you're alone
now we'd better hurry"
and with no trace
of hesitation she keeps going

Head over heels ...

You hear her
voice everywhere
taking the chair
she's a leading lady
and with no trace
of hesitation she
keeps going

Head over heels ...

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

Here's to us
one more toast
and then we'll
pay the bill
deep inside
both of us
can feel the
autumn chill
birds of passage
you and me
we fly instinctively
when the summer's
over and the dark
clouds hide the sun
neither you nor
I'm to blame
when all is said and done

In our lives
we have walked
some strange
and lonely treks
slightly worn
but dignified
and not too
old for sex
we're still striving
for the sky
no taste for humble pie
thanks for all
your generous love
and thanks for
all the fun
neither you nor
I'm to blame
when all is said and done

It's so strange
when you're down
and lying on the floor
how you rise
shake your head
get up and
ask for more
clear-headed and
open-eyed
with nothing
left untried
standing calmly
at the crossroads
no desire to run
there's no hurry
anymore
when all is said and done

SOLDIERS

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

Do I hear
what I think
I'm hearing
do I see the signs
I think I see
or is this
just a fantasy
is it true
that the beast
is waking
stirring in his
restless sleep tonight
in the pale moonlight
in the grip
of this cold December
you and I have
reason to remember

Soldiers write the songs
that soldiers sing
the songs that
you and I don't sing
they blow their horns
and march along
they drum their drums
and look so strong
you'd think that
nothing in the
world was wrong
soldiers write the songs
that soldiers sing
the songs that
you and I won't sing
let's not look the other way
taking a chance
cause if the bugler
starts to play
we too must dance

What's that sound
what's that
dreadful rumble
won't somebody
tell me what I hear
in the distance
but drawing near
is it only
a storm approaching
all that thunder
and the blinding light
in the winter night
in the grip
of this cold December
you and I
have reason
to remember

Soldiers write the ...

ABBA® The Visitors

I LET THE MUSIC SPEAK

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

I'm hearing images
I'm seeing songs
no poet has ever painted
voices call out to me
straight to my heart
so strange
yet we're so
well acquainted
I let the music speak
with no restrains
I let my feelings
take over
carry my soul away
into the world
where beauty meets
the darkness of the day

Where my mind is
like an open window
where the high and
healing winds blow
from my shallow sleep
the sounds awake me
I let them take me

Let it be a joke
let it be a smile
let it be a farce
if it makes me laugh
for a little while
let it be a tear
let it be a sigh
coming from a heart
speaking to a heart
let it be a cry

Some streets
are emptiness
dry leaves of autumn
rustling down
on old alley
and in the dead of night
I find myself
a blind man
in some ancient valley
I let the music speak
leading me gently
urging me like a lover
leading me all the way
into a place
where beauty will
defeat the darkest day

Where I'm one with
every grand illusion
no disturbance
no intrusion
where I let the
wistful sounds seduce me
I let them use me

Let it be a joke ...

Let it be the joy
of each new sunrise
or the moment
when a day dies
I surrender without
reservation
no explanations
no questions why
I take it to me
and let it flow
through me
yes, I let the
music speak
I let the music speak

ONE OF US

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

They passed me by
all of those great
romances
you were. I felt
robbing me
of my rightful chances
my picture clear
everything seemed so easy
and so I dealt
you the blow
one of us had to go
now it's different
I want you to know

One of us is crying
one of us is lying
in her lonely bed
staring at the ceiling
wishing she was
somewhere else instead
one of us is lonely
one of us is only
waiting for a call
sorry for herself
feeling stupid
feeling small
wishing she had
never left at all

I saw myself
as a concealed attraction
I felt you
kept me away
from the heat
and the action
just like a child
stubborn and misconceiving
that's how I
started the show
one of us had to go
now I've changed and
I want you to know

One of us is ...

TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

He had what you might
call a trivial occupation
he cleaned the platforms
of the local railway station
with no romance
in his life
sometimes he wished
he had a wife
he read the matrimonial
advertising pages
the cries for help
from different people
different ages
but they had nothing to say
at least not until the day
when something
special he read
this is what it said

If you dream of
the girl for you
then call us and get two
for the price of one
we're the answer
if you feel blue
so call us and get two
for the price of one

He called the number
and a voice said
Alice Whiting
the voice was husky
and it sounded quite exciting
he was amazed
at his luck
the purest streak
of gold he'd struck
he said I read
your ad, it sounded
rather thrilling
I think a meeting
could be mutually
fulfilling
why don't we meet
for a chat
the three of us
in my flat
I can't forget
what I read
this is what it said

If you dream of ...

She said I'm sure
we must be perfect
for each other
and if you doubt
it you'll be
certain when
you meet my mother

SLIPPING THROUGH MY FINGERS

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

Schoolbag in hand
she leaves home
in the early morning
waving goodbye
with an absent-minded smile
I watch her go
with a surge of
that well-known sadness
and I have to sit down
for a while
the feeling that I'm
loosing her forever
and without really
entering her world
I'm glad whenever I
can share her laughter
that funny little girl

Slipping through my fingers
all the time
I try to capture
every minute
the feeling in it
slipping through my fingers
all the time
do I really see what's
in her mind
each time I think
I'm close to knowing
she keeps on growing
slipping through my fingers
all the time

Sleep in our eyes
her and me
at the breakfast table
barely awake I
let precious time go by
then when she's gone
there's that odd
melancholy feeling
and a sense of
guilt I can't deny
what happened to the
wonderful adventures
the places I had
planned for us to go
well some of that we did
but most we didn't
and why I just don't know

Slipping through my fingers ...

Sometimes I wish
that I could freeze
the picture
and save it from
the funny tricks of time

Schoolbag in hand
she leaves home
in the early morning
waving goodbye
with an absent minded smile

LIKE AN ANGEL PASSING THROUGH MY ROOM

(Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus)

Long awaited darkness falls
casting shadows on the walls
in the twilight hour
I am alone
sitting near the fireplace
dying embers warm my face
in this peaceful solitude
all the outside world subdued
everything comes back
to me again
in the gloom
like an angel passing through my room

Half awake and half in dreams
seeing long forgotten scenes
so the present runs
into the past
now and then become entwined
playing games within my mind
like the embers as they die
love was one prolonged good-bye
and it all comes back
to me tonight
in the gloom
like an angel passing through my room

I close my eyes
and my twilight
images go by
all too soon
like an angel passing through my room

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ABBA The Visitors

ABBA The Visitors

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THE VISITORS

The Visitors, ABBA's eighth studio album, was released at the very end of November 1981. It is a complex record of contrasting emotions, which for years had the solemn honour of being the group's final full-length work, a muted coda to what had been a scintillating decade of pop. "We were going towards a darker period I think," Björn Ulvaeus was to say. "That album was about darkness and loneliness".

ABBA had closed 1980 with *Super Trouper*, one of the biggest selling studio records of their career; a hit-packed collection that had offered some comfort to ameliorate the shock of John Lennon's passing that December. By now, ABBA had been ahead of the pop pack for the preceding six years, and all four members – Björn Ulvaeus, Agnetha Fältskog, Benny Andersson and Anni-Frid 'Frida' Lyngstad – had been making music in some form or other for nearly two decades. Now, in their 30s, the machine that they had created was gracefully slowing. To add to this, the two couples within the group – Ulvaeus and Fältskog, and Andersson and Lyngstad – unions that had intrigued and endeared ABBA to so many, were now apart, Ulvaeus remarried in January 1981, and in February of that year it was announced Andersson and Lyngstad were splitting up.

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Against this backdrop, the first sessions for *The Visitors* began in late February 1981 at Studio A at the group's Polar Music Studios using the complex's new 3M digital recording equipment. Produced, written, and arranged by Ulvaeus and Andersson, it was engineered by their long-serving sound technician Michael B. Tretow. Again, the fabulous foursome were supported by their roster of studio and live musicians – Lasse Wellander on guitar, Rutger Gunnarsson on bass, Ola Brunkert and Per Lindvall on drums and Åke Sundqvist on percussion. Both now sadly passed, Gunnarsson and Brunkert had played on every single ABBA album to that point; and showing the loyalty of the studio team, Wellander and Lindvall would both appear on Voyage, 40 years later. Sessions continued in May and early June before the summer break, resuming in September as the band had a Christmas release date in mind, but, as ABBA biographer Carl Magnus Palm was to write, "the time when they would kill themselves to meet an imposed deadline was long since gone."

By November, *The Visitors* was ready. And of course, a new ABBA record needed a hit single. Manager Stig Anderson was not convinced that One Of Us, among the last songs recorded, should be the lead track, but Ulvaeus was sure it would be perfect – and as usual, he was right. It would be a huge hit and in several European countries, the final number one single of ABBA's career; a fine full stop to the chart machine's dominance; a sweetly sad song with Fältskog taking the lead vocals, set against swelling mandolins credited to 'The Three Boys', in reality Ulvaeus, Wellander and Gunnarsson. One Of Us was ABBA's Christmas message to the world, 1981.

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Alongside One Of Us, The Visitors is full of riches – some immediate and some that reveal their glory over time. The title track is up there among ABBA's greatest tracks. Over a muscular Euro-disco beat, it is a Lyngstad sung protest against the mistreatment of political dissidents behind the iron curtain and the fear of the 'knock on the door' in the middle of the night. "The Visitors was a fantasy about how I thought it would be to be a dissident in the Soviet Union . . . Not very pop, but it's a powerful image," Ulvaeus said in 1999. It has been said that the use of the repeated refrain "crackin' up" was not just a reflection on the paranoia of the song's protagonist, but also a comment on the state of the band. Originally titled Tango, the heavily synthesised Fältskog-sung Head Over Heels – the album's second single – probably comes closest to jollity, with its tale of a high maintenance, high-spending character; the musically bright When All Is Said And Done was chosen as lead single in America, providing ABBA with their fourteenth and final Top 30 hit. Soldiers offers a glimpse of the 'old ABBA' sound, a funkier Fernando, with Per Lindvall playing a fine, shuffling drum rhythm. One of Ulvaeus and Andersson's favourites on The Visitors, I Let The Music Speak, is another of their mini-symphonies. With flute and saxophones by veteran Swedish player Jan Kling, it is sung by Lyngstad and offers a very explicit nod to the musicals its writers would compose next.

While Two For The Price Of One has the froth and eccentricity of early ABBA, Slipping Through My Fingers could only be written by an older composer, and is a perfect example of an ABBA song as a slumbering giant. In August 1980, Ulvaeus and Fältskog's daughter, Linda, started school. "My seven-year-old daughter walking to school on her own for the first time, [gave me] that feeling, 'I've lost her now, I didn't take enough care of the time until now.' Every parent knows that feeling, even if you were with them every waking hour, you'd still feel that you were missing something," Ulvaeus told writer Jim Irvin in 1999. Slipping Through My Fingers was known and loved mainly by the ABBA faithful until its affecting inclusion in the stage musical and then film of *Mamma Mia*; the powerful, poignant song now resonates with new generations of the group's fans.

The Visitors closes on a downbeat note with Like An Angel Passing Through My Room, complete with its emotional line, "love was one prolonged goodbye." After many attempts to record this during the sessions at differing tempi, it ends as practically a two-hander with Lyngstad and Andersson, almost a rumination on their collapsed relationship. It ends with a clock, ticking, the passage of time clearly signposted. Although at the time it was in no way intended to be the final track on the final ABBA album, it was also a broader take on where the group were at in late 1981. They simply slipped away into the ether.

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The sleeve for *The Visitors* was designed by Rune Soderqvist and photographed by Lars Larsson at Julius Kronberg's studio in Skansen in Stockholm, opposite where today the ABBA Museum is located, near the bench on which the group sat for the cover of ABBA's first *Greatest Hits*. Kronberg was a painter and a professor at the Royal Swedish Academy of Arts and upon his death in 1921, his studio was bequeathed to the nation and reassembled at Skansen. Shot on a cold day in November 1981, the group are assembled in front of his 1905 proscenium painting of *The God Eros At Dawn*. It seemed ironic to have the four members – who all arrived at the session separately and left individually – positioned in front of such a work of art depicting the deity of love. These people, who on previous album sleeves had stood together on dance floors, circus rings, sat in helicopters or limousines, now stood or sat distanced from each other, looking away from the camera. The ambient lighting in the room cast shadows behind them and made sepia the blues and greens of Kronberg's painting.

Perhaps in a nod to their very first LP *Ring Ring*, for the first time in years they are in their civvies – there are no jumpsuits or gowns here; boots, casual suits and peak 1981 skinny tie for Andersson. All appear uneasy – perhaps enacting the words of the title song, they have clearly just heard the door-bell ring, leaving them, as the lyric goes "numb and frozen among the things I love so dearly, the books, the paintings and the furniture – help me." The back cover shows ten close-ups of Kronberg's works – and there, in its ornate frame, the front cover of the album is hanging, already a masterpiece. *The Visitors* is setting itself up as something special.

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Released in time for the 1981 holidays, *The Visitors* was something special. Heralded with TV adverts saying, "look forward to visitors this Christmas," it leapt straight to the top of the charts, and it was at the head of many a festive want-list. Yet those expecting a collection of pure pop pleasure were going to be confounded.

Although a split was never formally announced, within a year, after the release of *The Singles: The First Ten Years compilation*, ABBA were no more. Andersson and Ulvaeus went on to write the musical Chess with Tim Rice, and Fältskog and Lyngstad both enjoyed solo careers. There would be no The *Singles: The Second Ten Years* compilation.

For years, *The Visitors* stood as a melancholy memorial for a career that had so enlivened so many for the previous decade. However, through its darkness, The Visitors is an extremely enchanting listen, full of the possibility of what would have happened if ABBA had continued back then. Although it contains fewer big hits than their previous albums, all the tracks are their own intricate works of art, crafted to perfection.

We thought it was goodbye, but, thankfully, it was only an au revoir.

Daryl Easlea, January 2023

ABBA The Visitors

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Polar
SVENSKA STJÄRNARTISTERS SKIVMÄRKE
Stereo
ABBA
Side A
THE VISITORS
1. THE VISITORS
2. HEAD OVER HEELS
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PRODUCTION

Polar

SVENSKA STJÄRNARTISTERS SKIVMÄRKE

Stereo

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ABBA

Side B

THE VISITORS

1. WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE
2. SOLDIERS

All songs written, arranged & produced by Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus
All songs published by Universal Music Songs AB
Engineered by Michael B. Tretow
Digitally recorded and mixed at
Polar Music Studios, Stockholm
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Stereo

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ABBA

Side C

THE VISITORS

1. I LET THE MUSIC SPEAK
2. ONE OF US

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ABBA

Side D

THE VISITORS

1. TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE
2. SLIPPING THROUGH MY FINGERS
3. LIKE AN ANGEL PASSING THROUGH MY ROOM

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